

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----019464 181637Z /43

O P 181555Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6277
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 07873

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PORG UNSC XF PBOR LE IS SY
SUBJECT: FCO ON SOUTH LEBANON AND UNIFIL

REF: (A) STATE 117862, (B) STATE 123904

1. EMBOFF CONVEYED POLICY POSITIONS IN REFTELS ON MAY 17 TO POWELL, DEPUTY HEAD OF FCO NEAR EAST DEPT, WHO FOR THE TIME BEING IS CONCENTRATING ON THE SOUTHERN LEBANON PROBLEM. POWELL NOTED UK POLICY IS IN LINE WITH OURS AND HE CONCURRED WITH THE STARKLY REALISTIC U.S. ASSESSMENT IN REFTELS. BRITISH ARE PLACING GREAT EMPHASIS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. POWELL SAID IF THIS PRECONDITION IS MET, IT WILL PUT THE WESTERN POWERS IN A MORE EFFECTIVE POSITION TO GET
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THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE PALESTINIANS. ACCORDINGLY, THE FCO HAD JUST SENT INSTRUCTIONS TO THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN TEL AVIV TO URGE THE ISRAELIS TO COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL.

2. AS ANOTHER PART OF THE PACKAGE, FCO HAS SENT INSTRUCTIONS TO DAMASCUS AND BEIRUT. BRITISH EMBASSY

IN DAMASCUS IS INSTRUCTED TO URGE THE SYRIANS TO RESTRAIN THE PALESTINIANS FROM ATTACKING UNIFIL, SINCE THIS WILL UNDERMINE THE MORALE OF THE TROOP CONTRIBUTORS, LEAD TO A RESUMPTION OF FIGHTING IN THE AREA, AND IN NO WAY HELP SYRIA WHICH RELIES ON UN PEACEKEEPING MACHINERY IN THE AREA GENERALLY. BRITISH EMBASSY IN BEIRUT IS INSTRUCTED TO URGE GOL, IN ADDITION TO FOREGOING, TO DESPATCH PERSONNEL TO THE SOUTH (ALTHOUGH BRITISH INSTRUCTION IS NOT AS SPECIFIC AS OURS REGARDING NUMBERS). UK MISSION TO UN IS INSTRUCTED TO ASK THOSE WHO HAVE FULL RELATIONS WITH THE PLO, SUCH AS THE SENEGALESE, TO SEEK TO INFLUENCE THE PALESTINIANS.

3. FINALLY, BRITISH EMBASSIES IN KUWAIT AND JIDDA ARE GIVEN DISCRETIONARY AUTHORITY TO TAKE UP ISSUE WITH THEIR HOST GOVERNMENTS. HOWEVER, THESE EMBASSIES USUALLY REPORT TO FCO THAT THEIR HOST GOVERNMENTS CLAIM THEY HAVE NO INFLUENCE WITH THE PALESTINIANS. ACCORDINGLY, THE FCO CONSIDERS THE MAIN ARAB TARGET OF ITS SERIES OF INSTRUCTIONS TO BE THE SYRIANS. NEVERTHELESS, THE FCO THINKS IT IS NOT VERY PRACTICAL TO TRY TO PERSUADE THE SYRIANS TO MOVE THE ADF DOWN TO THE LITANI, SINCE SO FAR THE LATTER HAVE ADAMANTLY REFUSED.

4. WITH REGARD TO THE PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE, THE FCO IS SATISFIED WITH THE WAY UNIFIL IS BUILDING UP.

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POWELL NOTED UK IS AIRLIFTING THE FIJIAN. THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT ARAFAT IS CONTROLLING THE MAIN-LINE FATAH UNITS AND KEEPING THEM FROM ATTACKING UNIFIL. HOWEVER, AT LEAST UNTIL ISRAEL WITHDRAWS, IT IS INEVITABLE THAT THE PALESTINIANS WILL RE-INFILTRATE INTO THE SOUTH AND CONTINUE TO ATTACK ISRAEL. REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE PALESTINIANS DO SO FROM THE AREAS SOUTH OF THE LITANI OR NORTH OF THE LITANI, THE ISRAELIS CANNOT PREVENT SUCH ATTACKS BY LAND ACTION. NO MATTER HOW FAR NORTH IN LEBANON THE ISRAELI LAND FORCES MOVED, THEY WOULD STILL FACE A PALESTINIAN FRONT-LINE AND BE UNABLE TO PREVENT ATTACKS FROM IT AGAINST THE ISRAELIS. SINCE THE PALESTINIANS' ROCKET ATTACKS CAN THUS BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE IN ANY CASE, POWELL THOUGHT IT LIKELY THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD IN FUTURE CONFINE THEMSELVES TO RETALIATION BY AIR STRIKES ALONE.

5. MEANWHILE, IF THE PALESTINIANS CAN ONLY GET THROUGH TO THE ISRAELIS BY ATTACKING UNIFIL, THEY WILL DO SO, AND THERE IS THEREFORE THE DANGER OF FURTHER SUCH CLASHES. URQUHART TOLD THE BRITISH MISSION TO THE UN THAT HE IS WORRIED ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF A MAJOR CLASH.

HOWEVER, URQUHART AGREED WITH THE BRITISH THAT WE

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
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AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY
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EXDIS

SHOULD NOT GO BACK TO THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL IN ORDER
TO TRY TO GET A CLEARER MANDATE FOR UNIFIL.

6. COMMENT: WE WISH TO CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN AS CLOSE
AN EXCHANGE AS FEASIBLE ON LEBANON WITH THE BRITISH, AND
IF THERE IS NO OBJECTION WE WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE IN
THESE EXCHANGES MATERIAL FROM "THINK PIECES" SUCH AS
BEIRUT'S 2517 (WHICH WE NOTE INCLUDES SOME OPINIONS
FROM THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN BEIRUT) AND 2783. WHEN
AMBASSADOR PARKER RETURNS TO BEIRUT, WE WOULD APPRECIATE
HIS STOPPING OFF IN LONDON TO EXCHANGE HIS IDEAS WITH
THE FCO (BUT BEARING IN MIND MAY 29 IS A BRITISH
HOLIDAY). WE NOTE THAT BEIRUT'S 2517 REFERS TO A FORTH-
COMING MESSAGE EXPLAINING WHY PARTITION IS NOT A VIABLE
OPTION, AND WE WOULD BE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN THE
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VIEWS OF EMBASSY BEIRUT AS WELL AS THOSE OF THE DEPT
ON THIS SUBJECT.

7. WHILE MAINTAINING THIS EXCHANGE OF POLICY AND
ANALYSIS, WE SHOULD ALSO CONTINUE TO SEEK TO INVOLVE
THE BRITISH MORE DEEPLY IN LOGISTICAL ASSISTANCE TO
UNIFIL. EMBOFF DID NOT INFORM FCO OF SUGGESTION IN FYI
PORTION OF PARA 2B OF REFTEL B, WHICH REFERRED TO
POSSIBLE USE OF UK VESSELS FROM CYPRUS TO TRANSPORT
LEBANESE UNITS TO NAQOURAH. IF OUR IDEAS ON THIS SUB-
JECT HAVE FIRMED UP MORE, BELIEVE WE SHOULD SOUND THE
BRITISH OUT ON IT.

STREATOR

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